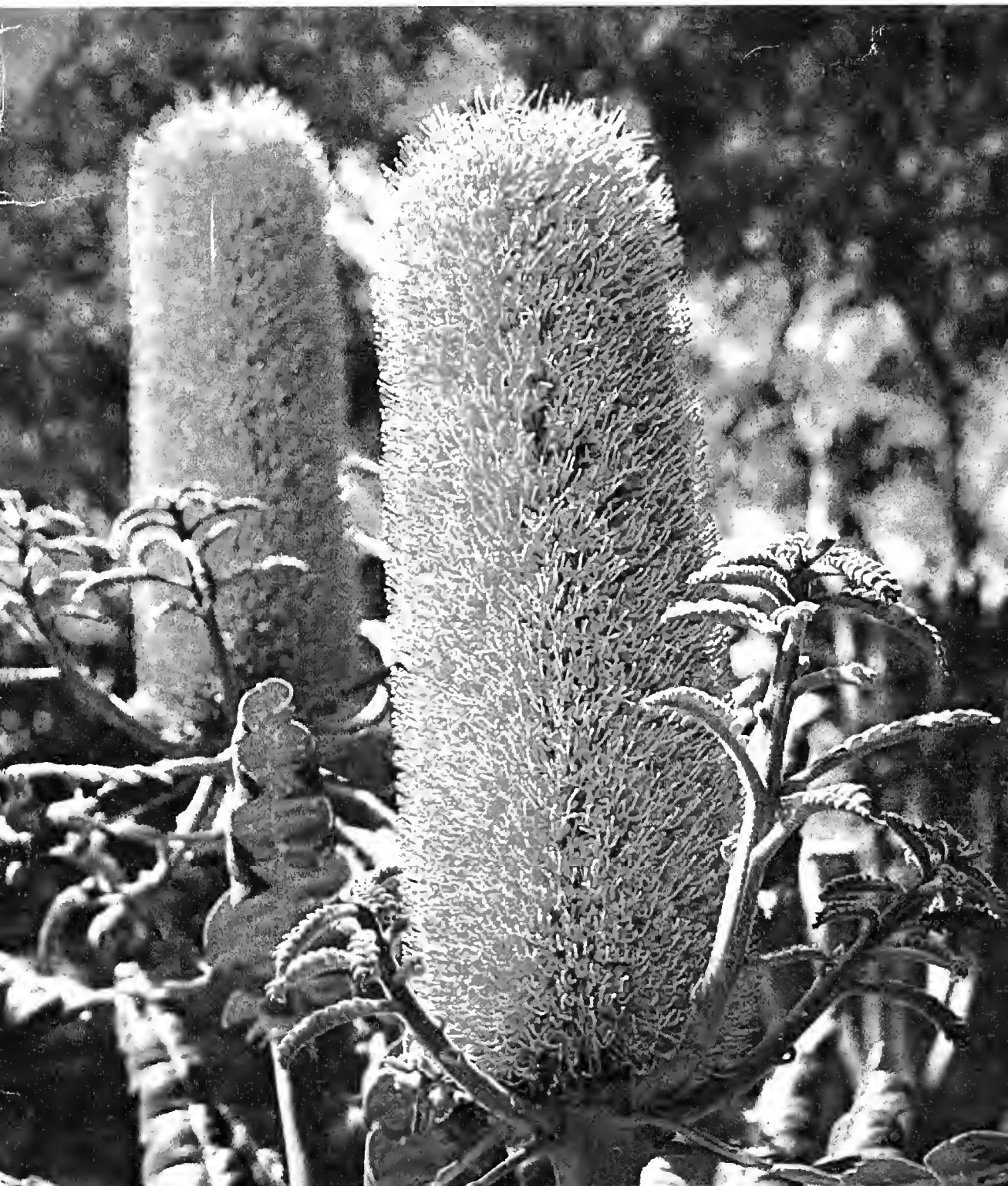


Canberra Botanic Gardens

GROWING NATIVE PLANTS

Vol. 1, 1971



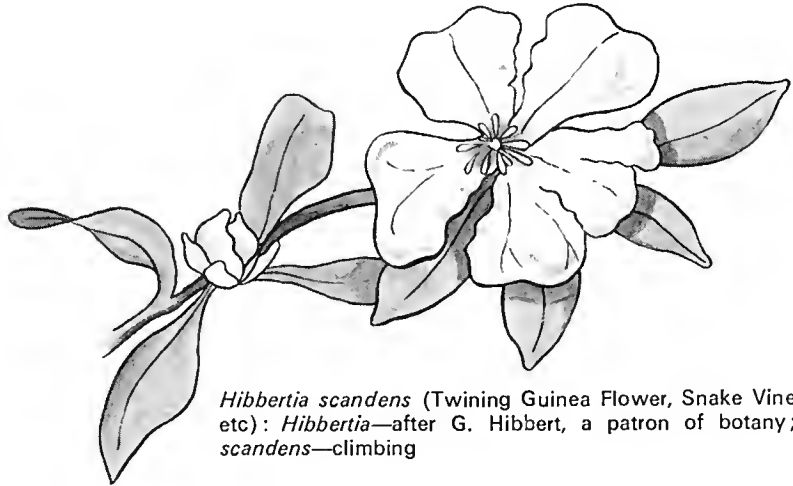
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Cover—*Banksia grandis*: *Banksia*—after Sir Joseph Banks, the famous British scientist who travelled with Captain Cook; *grandis*—large

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Hibbertia scandens (Twining Guinea Flower, Snake Vine etc): *Hibbertia*—after G. Hibbert, a patron of botany; *scandens*—climbing

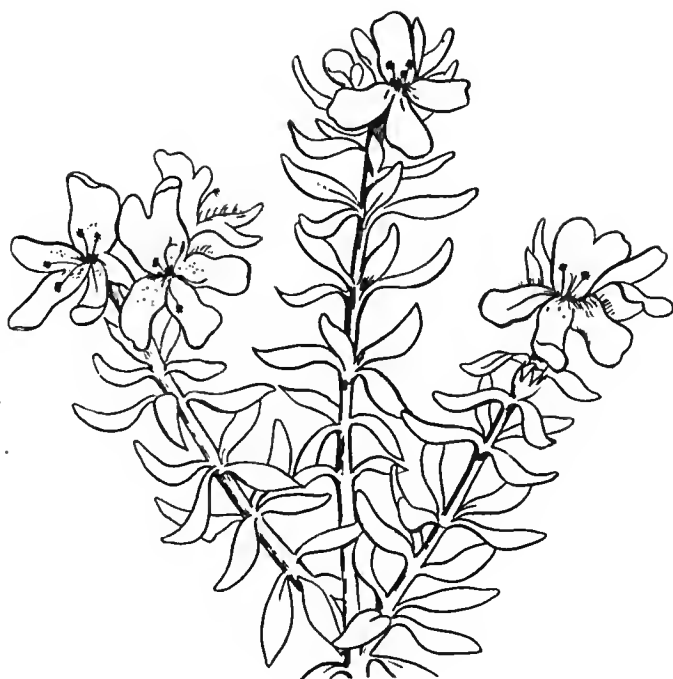
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INTRODUCTION

Westringia fruticosa: *Westringia* — after J. P. Westring, an 18th century Swedish physician; *fruticosa* — shrubby, bushy



The beauty, variety and profusion of species of Australian plants seen to be flourishing in the Canberra Botanic Gardens often inspires visitors to wonder whether there is any foundation for the widespread belief that native plants are difficult to grow in home gardens and to ask whether any special measures are necessary to grow them successfully.

The short answer is that a great many are easy to grow, some demand different care to normal home-garden treatment, and a few are difficult indeed. One characteristic that applies in nearly every instance is that native plants abhor root disturbance. That is why attempts to re-establish plants that have been uprooted from their wild native environment are almost always doomed to failure. Trained horticulturists in the field rarely consider digging out and bringing back a whole plant. They always prefer to gather seed or take cuttings, for this is not only the most reliable method of getting viable propagation material; it also reflects a concern and determination not to interfere more than is necessary with the natural environment.

The Canberra Botanic Gardens of native flora, like the Australiana sections of the Botanic Gardens in the several States, are primarily for research and experimentation. By welcoming visitors to inspection of the gardens, by the publication of information and by inviting inquiries for advice, the Canberra Botanic Gardens is active in promoting and encouraging the horticultural use of Australian flora, but it is unable to undertake the supply of plant material. Prospective home growers of native plants are advised to get seed or established plants in pots from nurseries specialising in native flora.

Every home garden of native plants is a real contribution to the preservation of the unique Australian flora. The inclusion of 'improved' varieties carries the ideal still further. Many of the most beautiful exotics in our gardens—roses for instance—were encouraged by man to evolve from very humble origins and it is interesting to speculate on what the horticulturists might achieve in their work on Australia's beautiful native plants. Every home gardener who has a planting of cultivated native flora is a participant in a fascinating enterprise.

This first volume of 'Growing Native Plants' describes methods proved reliable by the Canberra Botanic Gardens for the growing of several species of native plants under ordinary Canberra conditions. Propagation and cultivation procedures which are generally applicable are explained, but it should be understood that a plant's garden performance in other districts, where climatic conditions are different, might not be quite the same. Prospective growers in areas other than Canberra are advised to check on 'at home' conditions and requirements with local authorities. This information is generally available from State Botanic Gardens and the various Societies for Growing Australian Plants.

It should be noted that many Australian plants can vary a great deal within a species. A *Banksia* (*Banksia asplenifolia*) which grows naturally around Sydney as a medium-sized shrub about 6 ft high is also known as a prostrate plant suitable for a rockery. Numerous other examples could be cited of similar degrees of variation, not only in the size and spread of the plant but also in growth habits, flower colour, size and perfume. Readers should not be surprised to come across variations not described in this book.

Botanic names are given throughout this book—as they are in the Canberra Botanic Gardens—because common names can cause confusion in their variability from place to place. The common name Native Fuchsia is often applied to *Epacris longiflora* in New South Wales, but in Victoria it refers to *Correa reflexa*. Bottlebrush is loosely given to a number of species of *Callistemon Melaleuca*—or even *Banksia*.

The binominal system for naming plants has recognized universal application and Latin and Greek are used in accordance with an accepted scientific practice. The whole of the plant kingdom is considered as divided into groups, the members of which have similar basic characteristics. The major groups are known as families, for example *Myrtaceae* is given to a family of which the common European myrtle was regarded as a significant example. The family is broken down into smaller groups called genera, each group consisting of plants with morphological similarities, for example the members of a group sometimes called Tea Trees (which are in no way related to the shrub which provides the leaves for the beverage) are classified in the genus *Leptospermum*, from the Greek words meaning 'fine seed'.

Individual specimens within a genus are called species and the species name often describes an important feature of the plant or records the name of a person, eg *Leptospermum parvifolium* is the small-leaf Tea Tree, while *Grevillea caleyi* honours C. F. Greville, a patron of botany, in the genus name, and George Caley in the species name. Caley was a botanical collector sent to NSW by Sir Joseph Banks in 1799.

A species may sometimes be divided further by variety classification, eg *Leptospermum scoparium* var *rotundifolium*.

Hundreds of species of Australian plants are now available for planting into home gardens, thanks to the work of specialist nurserymen and many amateur gardeners in the various States. Successful growing of natives in the home garden depends a lot on the ability of the home gardener to provide growing conditions approximating those of the natural habitat. Normal home-garden treatment—cultivating the beds, fertilizing with chemical manures, frequent watering—is more often resented than enjoyed. More native plants in home gardens have been killed by kindness than by neglect. Important points that should be borne in mind are —

DRAINAGE: Most Australian plants require good drainage to give of their best. In some cases it is essential to survival. If good drainage does not exist naturally it can be achieved by raising the soil level of the garden bed by 12 or 18 inches with a rock wall or by placing weather-worn rocks in a pile or in bush sand to simulate a natural rockery.

COOL ROOT RUN: In their natural environment native plants grow in close association with each other, affording mutual support and forming a screen which prevents the rays of the sun from unduly raising the temperature of the surface soil. The root systems of most species lie near the surface and are extremely sensitive to temperature change. To

INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

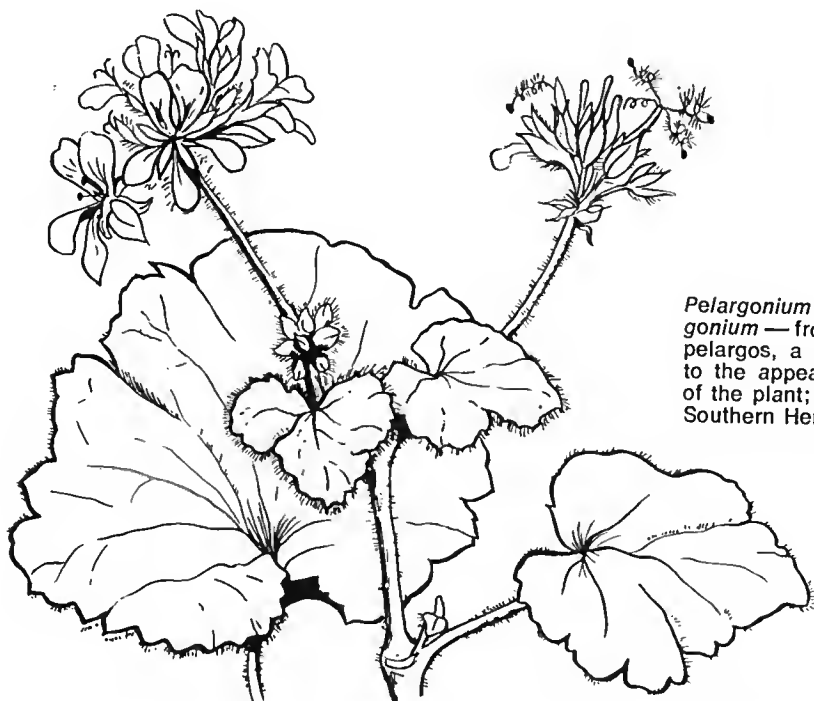
duplicate this cool root run for the plants, mulch in the form of dead leaves, she-oak needles, blue metal, and pebbles or stones, should be spread three to four inches thick on the garden. Mulch of vegetable matter should be topped-up when time and weather have reduced the effective thickness. Ground cover plants may also be used. A thick mulch has two other important functions: it inhibits weed growth and reduces evaporation.

WATERING: Rainfall in many parts of Australia is spasmodic with long dry periods. As a result many species are naturally equipped to withstand dryness but will not tolerate 'wet feet'. Watering must not be overdone once a plant is established. However, in prolonged dry weather, plants will benefit from an occasional thorough soaking. During summer all watering should be done in the evenings.

SOIL ACIDITY: In general native plants are found in soils with pH less than seven (ie, an acid soil). Most will accept a range of pH from 4.5 to 7.0, but pH 6 seems to be ideally suitable for most species. Lime should NOT be used in the proximity of natives.

FERTILIZERS: Much of Australia's soil is low in phosphates, consequently some native plants prefer—and in some cases demand—similar conditions. General fertilizers containing phosphate should be used with caution. Blood and bone is a safe effective fertilizer and a good dressing twice a year in February and August should produce satisfactory growth.

The foregoing points can be regarded as basic and generally applicable. Any variation (which will be rare) in the cultivation of individual species mentioned in this volume will be specifically stated.



Pelargonium australe: *Pelargonium* — from the Greek word *pelargos*, a stork, a reference to the appearance of the fruit of the plant; *australe* — of the Southern Hemisphere

BANKSIAS

Every garden of Australian character needs at least one Banksia for nearly all species are found wild only in Australia. About 50 species are known, mainly in the West, and it is the minority belonging to the eastern states which are known to thrive in Canberra. Some western species introduced to the Botanic Gardens in recent years are also settling down and promising to add to the number suitable for local conditions.

All are solid, spectacular shrubs or small trees with tough, handsome foliage with serrated edges, often large and holly-like or small and narrow. They are healthy subjects perfectly hardy to frost and also to drought when established, though water should be plentiful in early years to hasten bushy growth. Most species grow at a medium rate and flower at about three years old.

Birds and bees are attracted to the garden by Banksias, as the flowers are rich in nectar, and hence their common name of Native Honeysuckle. They have, however, no connection with the honeysuckle of the Northern Hemisphere.

Each stiff flower spike is actually a head of small flowers crowded in rows, and in some species it appears outlined by shiny curls. These are the styles of the flowers which remain in a hooked position. In other species the styles open out straight and the flower spike then resembles a soft brush. Flowers generally form close on older wood often sitting upright on horizontal branches or deep in the forks of branches with new growth projecting beyond. Dark woody seed cones follow and remain on the plant, opening only in extreme heat and releasing seed.

Colours in the western species range through subtle tones of most colours except blue, but in the eastern ones are restricted to straw yellows, gold, orange, bronze and green—rich and unusual additions to the winter garden as they flower between April and October.

The following Banksias are the best known for Canberra and they succeed in local unprepared soils as long as they are free from lime, which will lead to yellowed foliage and poor progress. A lawn or other uncrowded position in the garden should be chosen to allow their bold outlines to form a strong feature of the landscape. They



Banksia ericifolia: Banksia—after Sir Joseph Banks, the famous British scientist who travelled with Captain Cook; *ericifolia*—heath leaved. Other species mentioned in text: *spinulosa*—spiny leaved, a misleading name in this case; *marginata*—edged, bordered; *serrata*—serrated edge; *integrifolia*—with entire leaves

succeed in seaside gardens also and some can be used for wide hedges, trimmed and watered. Later pruning is optional and done only to control shape or increase bushiness.

Young plants raised from seed or in some species from cuttings also can be obtained from some nurseries dealing in native plants.

***Banksia ericifolia*:** The Heath-leaved Banksia (illustrated), native to New South Wales is a large upright shrub, reaching 15ft in 15 years, with fairly dense growth to ground level. Its appearance remains pleasant from year to year with light green narrow foliage closely set on the branchlets, which are curving spires through which the large flowers show. They are the longest among our eastern species—at least 10 inches—and colours range from rich gold to burnt orange. The hooked style of some are bronzy giving an effect of shot colour. The season, from April to October, is scarcely affected by the coldest spells of winter. A wide hedge may be made with this species, trimmed lightly and watered.

***Banksia marginata*:** The Silver Banksia of southern and eastern States and the ACT, is a compact and towering shrub here, 20ft high at 15 years old. It has thick limbs from ground level branching very freely, with narrow, dense foliage in tufts. Flowers are smaller than in the previous species, and are of the 'brush' type—3½ inches long. They open profusely in a long season from March to October especially on the sunny side in mid-winter, and all over the shrub varied tones of colour are seen as flowers change from yellow to browns. Bees often crowd around this Banksia.

***Banksia spinulosa*:** The Hairpin Banksia is a most beautiful, medium shrub for Canberra, though not rapid growing. Seen on the coast of NSW it is a flat-topped and dwarfed plant of the cliff top, but farther back in the mountains it is taller and upright. It develops asymmetrical and well-balanced forms and in cultivation reaches about 6ft high. It has a long season of fine quality flowers which are large and shining, bronze gold with hooked maroon styles.

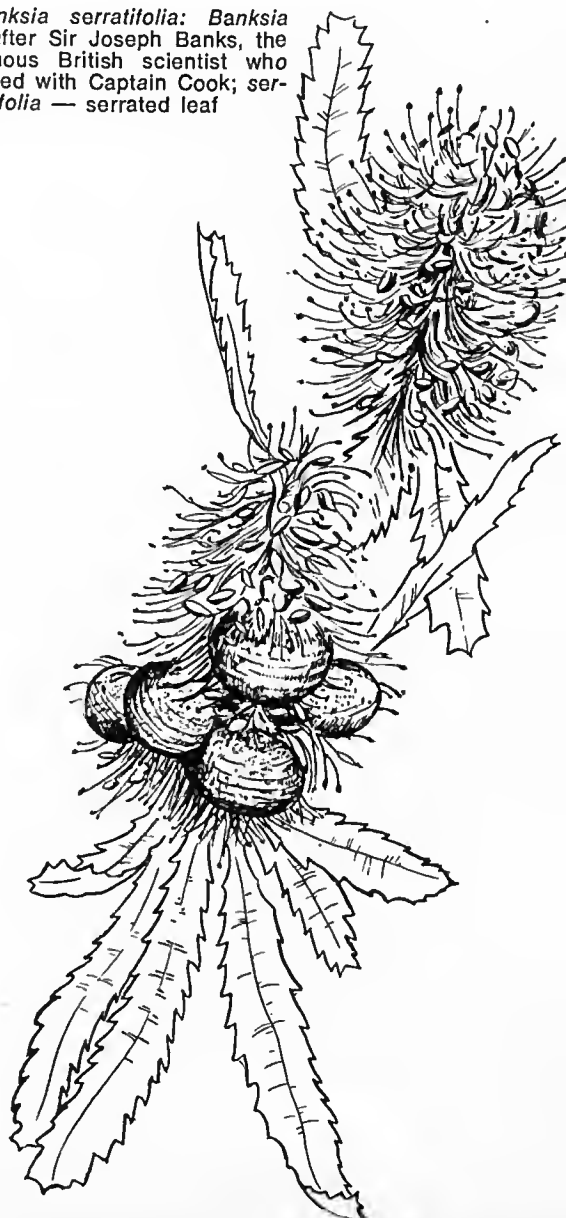
***Banksia serrata*:** The Saw Banksia of NSW introduces the larger-leaved species, handsome at any season. Leaves are up to 6in long, with prickly serrated edges, light green and shiny. The flowers are large, broad greenish 'brushes' from March to June. The species reaches small-tree proportions in its natural state, but in Canberra so far has only attained medium-shrub size.

***Banksia integrifolia*:** The Coastal Banksia is another larger-leaved species of NSW, Queensland and Victoria. It is familiar as a

gnarled tree of the coast, growing down to beach level with foliage often dry and blemished. Growth is more lax when watered in cultivation, quickly growing upright in a variety of forms with openly spaced branches and foliage. The fine dark leaves are up to 4in long, shiny above and whitish beneath and leathery instead of stiff and prickly. All through winter 'brush' flowers open at intervals. They are rather smooth, greenish yellow opening to clear straw yellow.

Several other species which have reached flowering size are *B. media*, *B. robur*, *B. baxteri*.

***Banksia serratifolia*:** *Banksia* —after Sir Joseph Banks, the famous British scientist who sailed with Captain Cook; *serratifolia* — serrated leaf



ERIOSTEMON MYOPOROIDES

The Long-leaf Waxflower (*Eriostemon myoporoides*) of Queensland, NSW and Victoria, is a hardy large shrub with a long flowering season of small but showy pale flowers set amid a firm mid-green foliage. It is a hardy plant that will thrive through cold and drought. It is often wider than its height and is very dense in growth right down to ground level. It anchors well and, as the branches are flexible and tough, is not liable to breakage in strong winds.

The narrow leaves are of a slightly waxy appearance up to 3in long and held out at a wide angle from the stem in an open, alternate arrangement. In the axils of each are heads of the flowers in groups of from three to five buds, well held out on half-inch long stems, even when only a few are open. Buds of apple-blossom pink open to flat, starry flowers with five white petals. The flowers are no more than three-quarters of an inch across but show out well against the green foliage. In Canberra the first buds open about the end of June, gradually increasing through the winter—depending on the season—until early September when the shrub will be dotted with flowers. Best months are usually October and November when flowering is profuse down to ground level. Odd flowers may appear in summer and autumn.

The shrub is available from nurseries and can be raised from cuttings struck indoors under glass, or outside in the shade, depending on the season. After 12 months the plant should be ready to plant out from its pot and may be located in almost any position in the garden, either in the sun or semi-shade. It seems to succeed in either heavy or light soil and will respond to light dressings of blood and bone in the growing season. If dense plants are required it can be lightly pruned, and used for an informal hedge.

If smut fungus—a black, sooty covering of leaves—appears it can be washed off with cotton wool and water or alternatively can be treated with white oil.

Sprigs of flowers can be used indoors but branches will not keep fresh and buds will not open.

The *Eriostemons* belong to a large plant family, *Rutaceae*, which includes the citrus trees and many small decorative native shrubs. *Boronias*, *Croweas* and *Phebaliums* all have garden potential.



Eriostemon myoporoides:
Eriostemon—from two Greek words, *erion*, wool, and *stemon*, a stamen, alluding to the downy stamens;
myoporoides—with leaves resembling those of another shrub, *Myoporum*

SCENTED PLANTS

Boronia megastigma:
Boronia—after an Italian,
 F. Borone who accompanied
 botanical expeditions in the
 18th century; *megastigma*—
 have a large stigma



Scent in Australian plants occurs less in their flowers than in their leaves and stems, where it is only noticed when they are bruised to release spicy and lemony perfumes, or when the volatile oils are released occasionally on hot, sunny days. Eucalypts, bottlebrushes and tea-trees belong to a very large family of plants which all have aromatic foliage.

Though scented flowers are fewer in number they include some fine garden plants that are readily available from commercial nurseries dealing in native plants. Many others may soon be brought into cultivation.

Australian plants vary so much within their own species that occasionally one growing in one district may be scented and in another area scentless.

Opinions vary over scent. What is pleasant to one person may be unpleasant to another or too faint to detect. *Grevillea bitermata* and *G. paniculata* are examples of dubious scents, particularly when their cream flowers are at full strength of flowering. A trace of some plant scents is pleasant but is sickly if inhaled too deeply.

A widely acclaimed Australian scented plant is the *Boronia megastigma* with its powerful and unusual perfume. Its various horticultural varieties are all nearly as good. *Boronia elatior* and *B. heterophylla* have lighter but pleasant scents in their vivid crimson flowers. *Boronia pinnata*, *B. dichotoma* and *B. floribunda* are still more delicate and a number of the plants would be needed to scent the surrounding air.

Acacias with their masses of flowers are the next important group and one species, *Acacia suaveolens*, is known as the Sweet Scented Wattle. This slender tree is found in many parts of eastern Australia and its flowers scent the air from early winter to spring. *Acacia deanei* is a roundheaded tree with feathery pinnate leaves. It flowers over a long season and is useful in winter when its sweet perfume floats over the garden. Several other wattles are similar to this in appearance and scent and include *A. parramattensis* which grows wild in the ACT. Another species for winter perfume is *A. flexifolia*, an unusual and dainty West Australian shrub up to 4ft high that grows well in light soil in Canberra.

In early spring *Acacia longifolia* is particularly sweet and fresh with masses of pale yellow finger-shaped flowers weighing the branches down to the ground. *Acacia dealbata*, the Mimosa of Europe, along with other *Acacia* species such as *A. spectabilis*, *A. prominens*, *A. cardiophylla*, *A. obtusata*, and *A. subulata* all form large trees or shrubs and give off pleasant perfumes. *A. glandulicarpa*

is a large ground cover spreading to 15ft, dotted with small yellow flowers. *Acacia verticillata* and *A. diffusa* are species with an unpleasant sour smell in their pale yellow flowers.

Hakeas, medium to large shrubs with spiny or prickly foliage, include several species with light scent, of which *Hakea sericea* is a good plant for Canberra gardens. It bears masses of cream or pink winter flowers over several months. *Hakea nodosa*, *H. eriantha* and *H. erinacea* are also lightly scented later in the spring.

Hakea scents are slightly reminiscent of honey and this is something often noticed in Australian plants. *Eucalyptus globoidea* and *E. baeuerlenii* are examples of a sweet honey scent. The flowers of some eucalypts are rather unpleasant and sour to smell. Two small shrubs that grow wild in the ACT, but which are little known in cultivation yet, are *Cryptandra amara* and *C. propinqua*. Their small white or pink flowers are sought by bees and their sweet honey perfume is noticeable as the plants are approached in winter.

The purple coloured *Dichopogon fimbriatus*, a small plant of the lily family grows to a height of about 2ft, and has a pleasant smell of vanilla, a scent that is evident in *Sowerbaea juncea*, a smaller plant that has round heads of mauve flowers on stems a foot tall. In the Daisy family are the *Olearias*, medium-sized shrubs with mauve or white flowers, that are sometimes pleasantly scented. A lovely perfume may be given off from the annual *Helichrysum bracteatum* when it is grown in patches and also from other Everlasting Daisies.

The flowers of some *Melaleuca* species, which form an important group of native garden plants, are sometimes unpleasant, but *Melaleuca gibbosa* is one with a light pleasant scent.

A list of plants with aromatic foliage would be endless. Two species with true lemon scent when bruised are *Leptospermum petersonii* (syn *L. citratum*) and *Backhousia citriodora*, a frost-tender tree. It is also noticeable though not as pronounced in *Melaleuca pulchella*, *M. erubescens*, *M. thymifolia* and others, also in *Calothamnus chrysanthus* and *Beaulortia squarrosa*. Included in this same family, the *Myrtaceae*, is a group of small shrubs called *Darwinia*, the leaves of which have a spicy perfume. Possibly the most beautiful of these is *D. citriodora*, a choice though frost-tender foliage shrub with a sweet perfume.

The *Prostanthera* species of the Mint family (*Labiatae*) can generally be detected by slight mint scents that are more bitter

than the leaves of the kitchen garden mint. There are, however, species of *Mentha* which have the familiar scent, such as *M. diemenica* which grows wild in the ACT.

A list giving common names of some plants mentioned is as follows:

BOTANICAL NAME and COMMON NAME

<i>Westringia fruticosa</i>	Native or coastal Rosemary
<i>Boronia megastigma</i>	Brown Boronia
<i>Boronia elatior</i>	Tall Boronia
<i>Boronia heterophylla</i>	Red or Kalgan Boronia
<i>Boronia pinnata</i>	Pinnate Boronia
<i>Boronia floribunda</i>	Pink Boronia
<i>Acacia deanei</i>	Dean's Wattle
<i>Acacia floribunda</i>	Sallow, Gossamer or Catkin Wattle
<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	Silver Wattle
<i>Acacia spectabilis</i>	Glory, Showy or Mud-gee Wattle
<i>Acacia prominens</i>	Grey Sally, Gosford Wattle, etc
<i>Acacia cardiophylla</i>	Wyalong Wattle
<i>Acacia obtusata</i>	Obtuse Wattle
<i>Acacia subulata</i>	Awl-leaf Wattle
<i>Acacia diflusa</i>	Diffuse Wattle
<i>Acacia verticillata</i>	Prickly Moses
<i>Hakea sericea</i>	Silky Hakea
<i>Hakea nodosa</i>	Yellow Hakea
<i>Hakea eriantha</i>	Tree Hakea
<i>Hakea erinacea</i>	Hedgehog Hakea
<i>Eucalyptus baeuerlenii</i>	Dwarf Cliff Gum
<i>Eucalyptus globoidea</i>	White Stringybark
<i>Dichopogon fimbriatus</i>	Nodding Chocolate Lily
<i>Sowerbaea juncea</i>	Vanilla Plant
<i>Olearia ramulosa</i>	Twiggy Daisy Bush
<i>Helichrysum bracteatum</i>	Yellow Paper Daisy
<i>Melaleuca squarrosa</i>	Scented Paperbark
<i>Melaleuca gibbosa</i>	Slender Honey Myrtle
<i>Leptospermum petersonii</i>	Lemon-scented Tea Tree
<i>Backhousia citriodora</i>	Sweet Verbena Myrtle
<i>Melaleuca pulchella</i>	Claw Flower
<i>Melaleuca erubescens</i>	Pink Paperbark
<i>Melaleuca thymifolia</i>	Thyme Honey Myrtle
<i>Beaulortia squarrosa</i>	Sand Heath Bottle-brush
<i>Darwinia citriodora</i>	Lemon-scented Myrtle

Many other plants could be named to show that a fragrant garden consisting entirely of Australian plants can be planned for all seasons.

MELALEUCA WILSONII

Melaleuca wilsonii:
Melaleuca—from two Greek words, melas, black, and leukos, white, because the first *Melaleuca* described had white branches against a black trunk, possibly blackened by fire; another opinion contrasts the white bark with the very dark foliage of some species; *wilsonii*—after T. B. Wilson, a 19th century traveller

Wilson's Honey Myrtle (*Melaleuca wilsonii*) is one of the many *Melaleucas* of decided home-garden value. This one, from Victoria and South Australia, is among the best and strongest growing in Canberra, and succeeds as a long-lived shrub that is hardy to frost and drought. Of elegant and thriving appearance all the year, it is most striking when it flowers in the spring.

Within the species there are a number of forms varying from upright to low and spreading, but always they develop a good shape. In height it reaches 5ft and can spread to 8ft, sometimes covering the ground with a cushion effect. Growth is dense and branching irregular, generally in straight, flattish sprays.

The narrow pointed leaves at a wide angle to the stem are in neat opposite arrangement. They are about half an inch long, smooth and have a lemon scent when bruised. In spring the young growing tips are a bright green.

At any time from the end of October the flowers open and are at their best in the first half of November. They are feathery bunches of vivid magenta rose stamens, closely set surrounding the stems of older wood.

In a cool and showery spring flowering may continue until the end of November, but in a season of hot dry spells flowering is often poor and short. Bees crowd the plant when it is in flower.

The species is exceptionally good for cut flowers. Even in long sprays it lasts for at least two weeks indoors.

Nurseries specializing in native plants can supply this shrub. Propagation is readily carried out from seed. At planting time it may be located in an open or semi-shaded position, after which little care is needed apart from watering during dry periods to avoid bare wood. Pruning is not necessary other than to control a desired shape and the shrub is generally free from diseases and pests.

The genus *Melaleuca* is adaptable in the home garden and may often thrive in a constantly damp or badly drained situation in which it is difficult to find a suitable plant to grow.

They are closely related to the *Leptospermums*—Tea Trees—and range in forms from small shrubs to large trees. Some of the larger trees are used commercially in boatbuilding and fencing and many species grow in coastal regions.



ISOPOGON ANEMONIFOLIUS

Isopogon anemonifolius:

Isopogon—from two Greek words meaning 'equal' and 'beard', alluding to the hairy fruits of some species;

anemonifolius—with leaves like those of some *Anemones*



Drumsticks is the common name given to the Isopogons, shrubs related to Grevilleas and Banksias. They are ornate and curious plants, rigid in growth with handsome foliage and rounded flower heads terminating the branches. The common name refers to the rounded fruits which can be found on the bushes at all times of the year.

About 35 species are known, mainly in Western Australia where the flowers are pink or yellow. The one illustrated here is native to the eastern States, extending widely from coast to mountains. In sea winds it forms a dwarfed and tufty ground cover and in more sheltered areas an upright shrub to 6ft high.

In Canberra it is hardy to frost and drought, remaining healthy for many years with little attention and gradually becoming a heavy-limbed shrub about 6ft high. Adequate water, however, ensures the best condition. A group of vigorous young plants around 3ft high may show an interesting variety of forms. All tend to be bushy, covering the ground well—some branches partly prostrate and others upright.

Single specimens are attractive in a border or in public places; groups may be set in gravel or tan bark or among large

rocks as this species will stand exposure.

The divided leaves grow stiffly upwards, tough and resisting blemish of all kinds. From autumn to spring they are tinged purple in pleasant contrast to the grey cone-like seed heads.

Any time between October and January the compact flower heads open, depending on water supply although November is generally the best month. In a dry year the soft yellow flowers are smaller and not as showy.

Seed is plentiful, falling easily from the 'cones' when they are left to open in a bag in a warm place. Young plants raised from seed can be obtained from some nurseries dealing in native plants, and a good time to establish them is from late August to mid-September or in the autumn. Local soils seem suitable, rather poor than rich, though coarse sand should be added to very heavy soil and lime would not be favourable.

With attention to watering, new plants grow steadily and are best left to shape naturally without pruning. No significant pests or diseases have been noticed.

Simple arrangements of foliage stems, with or without flowers and 'cones' are very effective and long-lasting in water.

GOODIA LOTIFOLIA

Goodia lotifolia: *Goodia*—
after Dr Mason Good, a
botanist; *lotifolia*—leaves like
the Lotus

This tall pea-flowering shrub grows wild in many parts of Australia and has various common names, such as Golden Tip, Clover Bush and Yellow Pea. Where an easy and quick grower is wanted this is a most attractive choice with several uses. Given plenty of room it makes a beautiful specimen plant—well set on a lawn and hardy enough for decorating public grounds. It hides a fence quickly and may be lightly trimmed to form a tall, loose hedge.

It is quite frost hardy being slightly deciduous in the coldest districts. It is very hardy to drought in the sense that although it loses wood in years of extreme drought it renews itself by long suckering branches when watered again, gradually forming a thicket-like shrub with strong whippy branches arching and curving to ground level. With attention to cutting out dead or bare wood a specimen may be kept in good condition for many years. Within a few years it reaches at least 12ft high with a similar spread, in garden conditions.

All parts are smooth and the foliage is a fresh green, at some seasons blue-green, with a bloom. Around mid-summer, if water has not been scarce, the appearance is lush with new tip growth. Individual leaves are trifoliate resembling clover.

From early October the shrub is covered in clear yellow pea flowers in short loose spikes. They continue for several weeks in a cool spring but a hot spell such as often occurs during October or November shortens the season.

Large quantities of seed set after flowering, making this an easy and cheap species to raise as the seed germinates freely. The small dark pods can be heard cracking open during summer and sometimes self-sown seedlings appear. Young plants may be bought from some nurseries dealing in native plants and thrive in almost any soil without preparation in a sunny or lightly shaded position.

Flowers do not last well in water, but the graceful sprays of leaves are useful and long stems may be used to fill in large arrangements.

The plant is so vigorous that it is unusual for it to be set back in any way by pests or diseases. Scale is the only trouble noticed and by cutting out affected branches when it is seen the use of chemicals is avoided.

It should be mentioned that the leaves of *Goodia lotifolia* are suspected to be poisonous to stock.



ACACIA DRUMMONDII

Drummond's Wattle (*Acacia drummondii*) grows wild among the undershrubs in the forests of south-west Australia and is one of many Western Australian plants which will thrive in Canberra, given a little care. Though not new in cultivation it is one of the lesser-known wattles—a beautiful, delicate shrub useful where space is limited in the garden.

It is tender to frost, wind and summer sun, all of which have caused losses in exposed positions. For the first few winters it must be protected from frost with a covering such as hessian. This should be thrown over nightly, supported on three stakes in the ground and not touching the plant. Shrubs when about 3ft high may not need covering as only tip growth will be killed.

Taller shrubs, trees or rocks give excellent shelter where plants can develop to perfection. If away from other plants the form is upright and either compact or slightly arching, with a number of thin reddish main branches from ground level. It reaches 5ft high and the same in width.

Variations in form are known, including a prostrate one which could make a useful ground cover.

If crowded among other plants this dwarf wattle spreads forward gracefully, and would adapt to a sloping wall or large rockery. It may also be grown in tubs and in mild districts as a hedge, lightly trimmed.

The foliage is ornamental and neat, mid-green or slightly bluish. Close inspection shows much divided though not feathery leaves, about one inch long, and facing upwards along the stems.

Flower buds for next spring may be seen forming in summer along the entire length of the stems, each spike held well out on a stalk, one to each axil.

From late September to early November flowers open rather unevenly, becoming profuse in October. The spikes are from three-quarters of an inch to 1¾ in long, outstanding in quality and softness of appearance. They are a clear canary yellow, and scentless.

The species usually sets some seed in Canberra and this should be harvested when



Acacia drummondii: *Acacia*—generally believed to be from a Greek word meaning to sharpen, alluding to the prickliness of the first species discovered; another opinion refers to the 'Egyptian Thorn' (*akakia*) a species of *Acacia* yielding gum-arabic; *drummondii*—after J. Drummond, first Government botanist of Western Australia

the pods are hard and brown. The germination rate can be improved if the hard seed coat is first softened with boiling water or scratched slightly before sowing with a file or sandpaper to admit water. Seedlings are susceptible to damping off and over-watering should be avoided.

Acacia drummondii has been grown from cuttings, but without special facilities this is not easy. Young plants may be obtained from most nurseries dealing in native plants.

Most soils with good drainage are suitable, including local and clay soils. The plant's position is most important. Growth is rapid and light pruning after flowering helps to maintain bushy and long-lived specimens. This is not a good wattle for cut flowers, but presses beautifully.



Scleranthus biflorus:
Scleranthus—after two Greek words meaning 'hard' and 'flower' alluding to the hardened fruiting calyx;
biflorus—two flowers

GROUND COVERS

Many Australian plants have a common habit of growing low to the ground and spreading. In the Canberra climate there is a tendency for native plants to grow this way. Any plant that grows wider than its height can be termed a ground cover, even if it is rather tall, as long as it spreads along the ground. A number of tall species attain a height of 5ft but have a spread of up to 15ft. These are excellent in street or public ground settings, but for the average gardener the lower-growing species are of greater use.

Among Australian plants there is a wide choice of shrubs from about 3ft tall down to those that are completely prostrate, some of them covering a large ground area with one plant. There are also a number of herbaceous plants which can quickly carpet a considerable space, though some of these lose condition in extremes of heat and cold. An advantage of Australian shrubs is that they are evergreen and look fresh and neat the year round. Most of them flower well.

There are several uses for ground cover plants. In districts where soil becomes overheated they help cool it by shading, and reduce water needs. They can clothe rough soil, uneven land and slopes. As a contrast to, and a setting for taller plants they are decorative in a garden plan. They are always most valued when dense and strong enough to suppress weeds. Carpeting types with invasive root systems should not be placed where they can smother young shrubs.

Because of the natural variability of Australian plants one species may have both prostrate and upright forms, for example *Grevillea juniperina*, and it is necessary to make certain the plant is of the required form before purchase. After planting, shrub types usually need no pruning other than that required to guide them into the space available for them or to encourage a more dense growth.

These are suggestions, based on their performance in Canberra, for some of the best species.

SHRUBS

Baeckea ramosissima (Rosy Heath Myrtle): Stiff slender branches in sprays, with tiny leaves and masses of small flat pink flowers in spring, and a few in other months. Water in drought; attracts bees. Height 1ft, spread 4ft.

Cassia odorata: Has branches which radiate from the centre into a fairly round form with bold pinnate leaves, light green. Saucer-shaped flowers of rich orange yellow often seen, especially in late winter to spring. Slightly frost tender. Grows better with good watering. Height 1ft, spread 4ft.

Calocephalus brownii (Cushion Bush): Very small shrub entirely grey from a web of white hairs. Thin rigid stems have tiny leaves and round heads of yellowish flowers in spring. Best in groups, clipped after flowering for dense growth. In cold winters loses condition. Height and spread about 1ft.

Grevillea baueri: Prostrate form—vigorous grower for a large space, with stiff dense growth in arching sprays. Young tips are copper coloured. Winter flowers are rose crimson. Height 3ft, spread 6ft.

Grevillea capitellata: Semi-prostrate form—this choice smaller *Grevillea* is of slender open growth, with long narrow leaves, and rounded flowers of dark crimson, hanging on long stems for many months. Height 2ft, spread 4ft.

Grevillea bitermata: Its long arching branches tend to cascade one way; very strong grower, with dense narrow prickly leaves.

Masses of cream 'spider' flowers with an unusual odour cover the plant in spring. This plant suppresses weeds and attracts bees. Height 3ft or less, spread 12ft.

Grevillea confertifolia: Stiff flattish branches with strong narrow foliage are always of fresh appearance. In spring the rounded flowers are an unusual purple, with a strange odour. Effective against weeds. Height 18in, spread about 4ft.

Grevillea juniperina: Prostrate form—tough, nearly flat shrub, with open frame of interesting angular branches clothed with narrow prickly leaves, and studded with yellow ochre flowers many months of the year and especially in winter. Spread to 10ft.

Grevillea laurifolia (Laurel Grevillea): Flat tough shrub with branches and foliage spreading into an even ground cover. Leaves are leathery, elliptical; the handsome flowers are a rich red. Hardy and long lived. Spreads to about 12ft if unpruned.

Homoranthus virgatus: A flat small shrub forming a patch of small narrow leaves which are succulent and grey, often with pinkish tints. It has small greenish flowers in spring, and is frost hardy. Spreads to about 3ft.

Hypocalymma cordifolium (Cream-flowered Myrtle): An even and dome-shaped plant of extremely neat and smooth appearance. Soft straight branches are pink while young, with yellow green leaves and small cream flowers in spring. Slightly frost tender; rapid growing. Height 3ft, spread 6ft.

Kunzea pomifera (Muntries): A flattish shrub, with tapering branches generally forming an elegant irregular outline studded with fluffy cream flowers in spring. Neat foliage of good appearance all seasons. Height 1ft or less, spread 4ft.

Melaleuca pulchella (Clawflower): Easy to grow, suppressing weeds with its arching branches which make a dome shape or cascade. Small dense foliage and beautiful mauve claw flowers profuse in spring, continuing till autumn. Height 3ft, spread 6ft.

Micromyrtus ciliata (Fringed Heath Myrtle): A first choice for a fairly large scrub, long-lived and hardy. Long arching and tapering branches are densely outlined with tiny foliage and close-set tiny flowers; these open white or pink and fade to deeper pink making a long season from early spring. Height 3ft or less, spread 6ft.

Lotus corniculatus (Bird's Foot Trefoil): A wild flower of the Northern Hemisphere also, it forms a loose cushion covered with gold pea flowers in spring. For full sun, clip back

after flowering as its straggling stems become shabby. Easy to grow from seed. Height 1ft, spread 4ft.

Scleranthus biflorus (Knewel): Tiny foliage masses tightly in this cushion plant of bright green (often taken for moss), which has tiny yellowish flowers in spring. Decorative singly or in groups. For clean soil only as weeds will grow through it. Height 6in, spread 15in.

Viola hederacea (Ivy-leaf Violet): A carpeting plant dense in well-watered sites, specially with summer shade. Flowers of white and violet on erect stems from October to December.

Pelargonium australe (Native Pelargonium): For a larger-leaved ground cover, this is attractive singly or in groups, each plant making a compact clump with round sturdy leaves above which pale pink flowers open during spring and summer. Light soil and good watering improve general quality and size. Height 1 to 2ft, spread 2ft.

Prostanthera cuneata (Alpine Mint Bush): A cushion-like shrub almost round or interestingly irregular. The neat dense leaves are rounded and provide a dark background for the large blue white flowers of good quality; flowers in early spring. Height 1ft to 2ft, spread 3ft.

Pultenaea pedunculata: A small shrub wild in the ACT, of loose cushion habit, with small firm leaves and masses of rich orange pea flowers for weeks in spring. Height 1ft, spread 3ft.

Scaevola aemula (Mauve Fanflower): A beautiful soft shrubby plant for light soils with stems erect at the centre, outer ones spreading to form a loose cushion. Height 18in or less, spread 3ft. This plant needs watering during drought periods.

HERBACEOUS AND CARPETING PLANTS

Carpobrotus aequilaterus (Angular Pigface): Thick fleshy creeper, commonly covering large patches by the sea. Easy to raise and adaptable, it provides a quick clean cover for such areas as drive strips. Shiny magenta flowers in spring.

Dichondra repens (Kidney Weed): A rapid carpeter covering any area with soft kidney-shaped leaves. Good for drive stripes, but use with care among growing shrubs as its matted roots are invasive. Slightly frosted in coldest districts, but quickly recovering. Height about 6in.

The above are a selection only of many possible species, and most of them are available from nurseries specializing in native plants.

INDIGOFERA AUSTRALIS

Indigofera australis:
Indigofera—recalling the
fact that Indigo comes from
the leaves of some species;
australis—of southern lands

Austral Indigo (*Indigofera australis*) is a tree-like shrub of the Pea family found in all States, and varying in size, habit and colour which is not surprising as it occurs over such a wide area. Growing wild in harsh conditions it is often straggly and leaning with few main stems, but with garden care it becomes a superior plant with beautiful sprays of blue-green foliage and dark purplish stems. These are seen at their best in a mixed border in contrast with other greens in a display of foliage.

The forms most commonly sold are perfectly frost hardy and also stand some drought, though adequate watering improves quality and prevents bare wood and dead branches. Its natural habit is upright, to 7ft high, with flexible stems tending to arch one way, but it can be trimmed lightly to make a strong and freely branched shrub. In certain soils plants sometimes lean on the ground after loosening by storms, and interesting examples have been seen of such plants adapting themselves to nearly prostrate growth. Two such, after trimming, fanned out to cover 10ft across. These strong shrubs were improved by the experience and it suggested that the species is suitable for a ground cover or cascading down a slope.

Leaves are openly spaced on the stems, pinnate, around 4in long and velvety smooth to the touch. Their appearance is clean and fresh at all seasons, unblemished by pests and diseases, and the beautiful blue-green is most apparent during colder months.

Flower colour is unusual, ranging through soft purple hues, often pinkish and a change from other species flowering at the same time. The flowers are smooth, in short spires in the leaf axils, freely produced and showy, outlining the curves of the stems. They open any time from mid-September and may continue till November in a cool spring. After flowering the shrub is hung with shiny, bright-green pods ripening to squarish, hard seed. This is always plentiful and is the means by which young plants are raised. The seeds are hard and need soaking overnight in hot water before sowing. Most soils are suitable as long as free from lime, and with ordinary attention to watering the plants grow quickly after planting out and can be expected to have a fairly long life if protected from extreme drought.

Most nurseries dealing in native plants stock this species. Only healthy specimens should be chosen as it may not grow away from a check.



GREVILLEA BAUERI

Grevillea baueri: *Grevillea*—after C. F. Greville, a patron of botany, and once vice-president of the Royal Society of London; *baueri*—after the German brothers Bauer, botanical illustrators



This sturdy shrub from the mountain regions of NSW is a most desirable addition to the garden for its general hardiness and bright winter flowers. The species is variable in every way and a new plant begins early to develop its own individual habit, which may be spreading or upright; symmetrical or not. It may reach at least 6ft high, or 10ft across. Density of growth, leaf character and flower colour also vary according to the district of origin.

All forms are hardy to cold, and bushy plants hardy to drought also. Those with well-spaced branches are open to drying out and without adequate watering may struggle for several years, gradually deteriorating into bare wood with poor foliage and flowers. Regeneration is then unlikely even if the shrub is watered and trimmed later.

One form is upright and rounded, with a stiff open frame. The closely set leaves—a pleasant mid-green—are three-quarters of an inch long with waving margins and rough upper surfaces, tough in character. Over the bold outline of the shrub individual flowers open, in heads about 2in across and blacken as they die. A conspicuous dark style extends stiffly from each flower and the colour is rich crimson with cream tints. The season starts in April, continuing all winter, with bright flushes during mild showery spells. Flowers open well into November

though somewhat eclipsed by the spring show.

Another form has attractive bushy growth, lighter and softer in character, and it tends to make a natural dome with graceful arching branches. A spread of 7ft wide by 4ft high at four years old is an example of typical rapid progress, and naturally it is a good large ground cover. Towards the end of winter new growing tips are freely made, giving coppery tints which are held for many weeks. At this time, the first flowers are opening in soft rose crimson, dotted all over the shrub.

Pruning is generally not necessary, but a little light pruning may be done to advantage if sprigs of flowers are taken for indoor decoration during winter.

Seed is often found, but propagation is easy from cuttings, specially towards the end of winter, and short, half-ripe tips root readily in gentle heat. Plants may be bought from some nurseries dealing in native plants, and they succeed when planted in lime-free soils, preferably lighter ones.

Adequate watering is desirable and avoids the risk of a check. Plants are generally healthy, though sometimes on close inspection aphids are noticed. This species will cross with others such as *G. lanigera* and *G. rosmarinifolia* to produce new and worthwhile subjects.

HYPOCALYMMMA ANGUSTIFOLIUM

Hypocalymma angustifolium:
Hypocalymma—from two
Greek words, under, and a
veil, alluding to the calyx;
angustifolium—narrow leaved



The Pink-flowered Myrtle (*Hypocalymma angustifolium*) is a small shrub related to the Tea Tree (*Leptospermum*) and the Bottle-brush (*Callistemon*) and common in WA. It is unusual and dainty when flowering for a few weeks in spring and does best when found a position sheltered from strong winds.

It is frost hardy but not a tough subject either in winter storms or summer heat. Growth is dry and fragile and an exposed plant is liable to be blown sideways, becoming a poor shape, with bare wood. In shelter, however, with adequate water and with yearly pruning for bushy growth, a more lush plant results which will live a good number of years with continued care. When five years old it will probably be a dense shrub 3ft high with flexible, thin branches weeping to cover the ground 5ft across.

Leaves are up to an inch long and linear. They emerge from the greyish papery stems in opposite pairs either at right angles or reflexed and the effect is spiky. When bruised their perfume is sweet and spicy.

General appearance through the year is dull or inconspicuous, but the flowers always attract attention when the season begins in October or even mid-September in early years. They are set close on the stems in whorls of three or four in the axils of the leaves, and like them are very regular and neat. Opening first at the stem tips, flowers are cup-shaped with stamens very prominent giving a fringed effect. Colour may be white, cream or pink and the pink forms deepen to red with age so that there is always a range of soft carmine tints along the stems. Bees are often seen visiting the small flowers.

New tips are growing as flowering passes, and these when half ripe are used as cuttings for propagation. Seed has not been found here. Most nurseries dealing in native plants stock this shrub, and when planting out the local lighter soils are suitable, as long as free from lime. From early stages it is a good plan to give a mulch of leaf mould or compost around a young plant to keep the soil cool, along with light trimmings for bushy growth. With adequate water it then grows away quickly and flowers while young. Serious pests and diseases have not been noticed.

This is a very pretty shrub for cutting, easy to arrange and living in shallow water for a long time. It will sometimes dry out if left, keeping enough colour for use in dried arrangements.

BORONIA HETEROPHYLLA

On seeing the Red or Kalgan Boronia (*Boronia heterophylla*) in vivid flower everyone may wish to have one, and may wonder if it is easy to obtain and grow. It may be bought from some nurseries dealing in native plants, and its popularity is established in gardens as an easily-grown medium shrub which will live a good number of years with simple care.

Like the Brown Boronia (*B. megastigma*) it is native to WA, is more robust and has a sweet scent in both leaves and flowers, though less powerful than the better known species. When lingering over the scent a slightly bitter aroma is sometimes noticed recalling Rue, and other plants of this family (*Rutaceae*) to which Boronias belong.

Growth is dense, flexible and soft in all parts and quite hardy to local winter conditions. Drought and hot winds, however, are not tolerated, and adequate water must be given specially in summer. It is essential to keep the roots cool and as watering on bare soil will not do this in extreme heat a mulch must be used unless nearby plants provide shade. Making sure the ground is soaked first several inches of leaf mould or compost should be put around the plant. Another method is to use sizeable flat rocks. These look attractive, and in fact a large rockery makes a fine setting for this subject; with its roots protected it flourishes in full sun.

In habit it is evenly round or oval, quickly making a mature specimen which may be 3ft high when two years old from planting, and eventually reaching over 4ft high. Healthy foliage has a fresh appearance all the year and individual leaves may vary on one plant from narrow and simple to finely divided.



Boronia heterophylla: *Boronia* —after an Italian, F. Borone who accompanied expeditions in the 18th century; *heterophylla*—variable leaves

From the leaf axils the flowers hang on short stalks, squarish waxy bells a quarter of an inch long, in clusters of two or three or singly. They appear around the third week of October and are a brilliant magenta pink, an unusual colour among shrubs at this season. On fading they close again to look like pointed buds and turn paler pink and white; this colour holds till around mid-December in a cool spring. They finally fall, and seed has not been found here.

Propagation is easy from cuttings, using young stem tips at a half-ripe stage; plants succeed in any lime-free soil, light or heavy. Pruning is another operation which should be done regularly to keep up bushy growth, and if desired this may be combined with cutting freely for decoration. This is a good time to prune as before flowering is over new growth is starting which would be lost if pruned later.

No serious pests or diseases have been noted.

Melaleuca incana: *Melaleuca*—from two Greek words, melas, black and leukos, white, because the first *Melaleuca* described had white branches against a black trunk possibly blackened by fire; another opinion contrasts the white bark with the very dark foliage of some species; *incana*—hoary



MELALEUCA INCANA

This weeping shrub with feathery foliage tinted blue-green or grey attracts admiration whenever seen. It is the Grey Honey Myrtle of south-west Australia, an easy subject for the beginner in growing native plants or for any gardener looking for an unusual and useful addition to the garden.

It grows rapidly to about 6ft high and wide at five years old, with compact soft growth to ground level, its weeping tips waving in the breeze. Eventual height is at least 9ft though size and shape can be determined by pruning. It has a naturally dense frame of thin branches from the base and when established resists drought well though adequate water brings lush growth. Specimens exposed to drought associated with strong winds have been seen in poor condition. The species is hardy to cold, and only in winters of unusually hard frosts has slight chilling been noticed in the foliage.

Leaves are narrow, half an inch long, and like the young stems are covered with transparent hairs which are enhanced by cold. These give the hoary appearance which is less apparent in summer. Foliage tints change with the seasons, and pale green is added to the grey with new tips in spring and autumn. These turn pinkish with the first May frosts and deepen to purple as winter advances, specially in open situations.

The beautiful primrose yellow brush flowers are up to an inch long, soft and graceful like the foliage. They open towards the end of October for three to four weeks and are profuse in a good year. If water has been scarce in preceding months flowering is sparse and brief, but the home gardener can guard against this.

Small woody seed capsules follow and remain on the shrub some years, yielding plentiful seed for easy propagation. Plants may also be raised from cuttings if necessary, using two to three inches of stem tips when half ripened.

Most nurseries dealing in native plants stock this species, and most soils are suitable especially lighter ones. It must not dry out while young, and it is liable to wind-rocking while a single stemmed young plant. Among its many uses are as a thick, trimmed hedge; to hide a fence; or grouped in public grounds.

Pruning and decorating may be combined as both flowers and foliage are pleasant and easy to arrange, lasting well in water even as long sprays. An established plant may be cut freely.

Occasional white scale is the only pest noticed and this may be controlled by white oil sprays. Several applications are usually necessary for a complete kill.

MICROMYRTUS CILIATA

The Fringed Heath Myrtle (*Micromyrtus ciliata*) is a well-known shrub which will interest every gardener looking for the choicest plants. Graceful in appearance yet tough in constitution, it remains healthy for years with little or no attention. Once established and bushy it stands drought well, or if any branches should die out it regenerates well after watering later. However, adequate water ensures more lush and continuous growth and must be given for the first years after planting.

Habit varies from prostrate to upright, and the low forms are specially attractive. With age it may spread over 9ft across, slowly reaching 3ft high with long arching and tapering branches. In a sunny position growth is dense and stiff—an excellent ground cover for keeping down weeds. It is spectacular in a large rockery and lends itself to landscaping design around the walls of buildings as well as to any slope or front of border.

This species has the tiniest of leaves and flowers among native garden shrubs, but both are of solid substance for their size, and being massed are effective. Leaves are precise pairs, an arrangement often seen in shrubs of the family *Myrtaceae* to which also Paperbarks (*Melaleuca*) belong. It gives them a neat and clean appearance at all seasons and thus many are valued as foliage

plants apart from their flowering interest. The leaves of all are aromatic when bruised and seldom blemished by pests or diseases.

Towards the end of winter the shrub brightens to carmine as flower buds with reddish calyces develop. The flowers outline the branches in clusters at the end of short lateral stems, and open first low on the branches. Flowers are cup-shaped with five rounded petals, white or flushed pink or red, often mingled on the same plant.

They age to deeper reds and remain firm for many weeks thus extending the season of colour till the end of November. In some years stray autumn flowers appear.

Good seed is difficult to obtain and propagation is by means of cuttings of stem tips taken when half ripened. Young plants can generally be bought from nurseries dealing in native plants and sometimes are offered under separate horticultural names according to habit and colour. When planting out they should be given light soil free from lime and they then grow quickly, coming into flower while young. Pruning is optional and a little light trimming is effected if sprays of flowers are cut for decoration. These are easy to arrange and long-lasting in shallow bowls of water. Sometimes as they dry out slowly such stems will keep enough colour to be useful in dried arrangements.



Micromyrtus ciliata: Micro—small; myrtus—a Myrtle; ciliata—fringed, alluding to the fringe of minute stiff hairs round the leaves



Westringia fruticosa:
Westringia—after J. P.
 Westring, an 18th century
 Swedish physician; *fruticosa*
 —shrubby, bushy

WESTRINGIA FRUTICOSA

As a large permanent feature in a garden or public grounds where space is available, the Coastal or Native Rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*) is an excellent choice. It is an easily grown shrub of simple and neat appearance which grows wild near the coast of NSW. Stretches of it are seen hugging the cliffs and down to beach level, either prostrate or several feet high depending on situation.

White flowers dot the shapely plants. Growth is naturally stiff and bushy but responds to garden treatment by growing

much taller. It reaches at least 6ft high and 15ft across, often forming a regular dome with its lower branches covering the ground. It is useful as a large type of ground-cover plant. Sometimes it throws out one or two main branches to develop an irregular habit, but generally the plant is shapely. After reaching a mature size it does not deteriorate quickly with age as some species do, but maintains a good condition for years. During the coldest weather it keeps a fresh appearance and is also drought hardy, though adequate water should be given to avoid a tendency to yellowing leaves and bare wood.

Foliage is a dark, even green, and a covering of short hairs on the young tip growths and leaf undersides gives a silvery tint which adds to its attractiveness. Leaves are up to three-quarters of an inch long, narrow and pointed and set closely in whorls around the stem. The name Rosemary refers to the appearance of the plant only, as the leaves have not the familiar aroma though a light scent has been noticed in the flowers in one location.

The flowers are also three-quarters of an inch long, set round the stems in the axils of the leaves. In shape they resemble other flowers of the Mint family. They are from white to palest mauve with reddish and yellow brown spots near the throat. Though the shrub is never smothered in flowers, they are conspicuous against the dark foliage and are seen most months of the year except in extreme heat or cold. In November they are abundant.

Young plants raised from cuttings may be bought from nurseries specializing in native species, and may be planted in any soil. Owing to its original habitat it is a good choice for a seaside garden, withstanding salt spray. As a cut flower the stiff straight sprays are surprisingly handsome, especially where a large arrangement is wanted, as quite long sprays live well in water and continue to open their buds for weeks. Yet another use is as an indoor plant when it remains equally fresh in a reasonably cool atmosphere, and continues flowering.

Pests and diseases never seem to trouble this species.

THRYPTOMENE CALYCINA

Thryptomene calycina:
Thryptomene—a Greek word
meaning made small, alluding
to the small size of most
Thryptomenes; *calycina*—
emphasising the prominent
calyx of the flower



The Grampians Heath Myrtle (*Thryptomene calycina*) is a beautiful shrub found growing wild in south-west Victoria, where it is common on rocky mountainsides. In Canberra it is slightly frost tender and usually needs protection in its early years, though in some sheltered positions, as under tall trees, this may not be necessary. Such a choice species, however, is worth some trouble and should be covered from mid-May to mid-August. A neat method is to put three stakes round the plant over which hessian or newspaper can be thrown each night. In later years an established and bushy young plant is no worse for having some tips killed, and grows away in spring as if it had been lightly pruned.

A rounded bush develops, soft in character, with dense branching and unusually free lateral growth hiding the frame down to ground level. It is as well to keep it bushy by pruning if necessary for as an open plant its brittle branches are liable to be broken by sudden winds or the weight of snow. Growth is rapid and a shrub may be over 6ft high and 8ft wide at seven years old, though size and shape can be controlled by pruning. In a frost-free district it could be used as a hedge plant. It is only moderately drought resistant and should receive adequate water during dry spells.

The foliage is small, neat and smooth and aromatic on brushing past the shrub. Its general appearance is clean and healthy in all seasons and the young growing stems have reddish tints during summer.

Flowers of exceptional quality are the main attractions of this species, which flowers from autumn to spring. During April the first pinkish buds appear low on the branches and open to tiny flat flowers facing all one way on straight tapering sprays. They are pure white with a dark eye. Flowering gradually spreads over the shrub until in mid-winter the plant appears covered with snowy spires. These are checked only by the severest spells of cold. On fading, the flowers become suffused with pink tints which are held until mid-October and merge into the brighter spring show of other plants.

This is a perfect cut flower lasting many weeks in water even as long sprays. At the same time the cutting of sprays of flowers carries out some pruning. This is advisable to retain a bushy shape and avoids bare wood as well as prolonging the life of the shrub. Young plants are generally raised from cuttings and may be bought from some nurseries dealing in native plants. In the garden, *Thryptomene* requires light soil free from lime in the sun or in light shade. No pests or diseases have been noticed.

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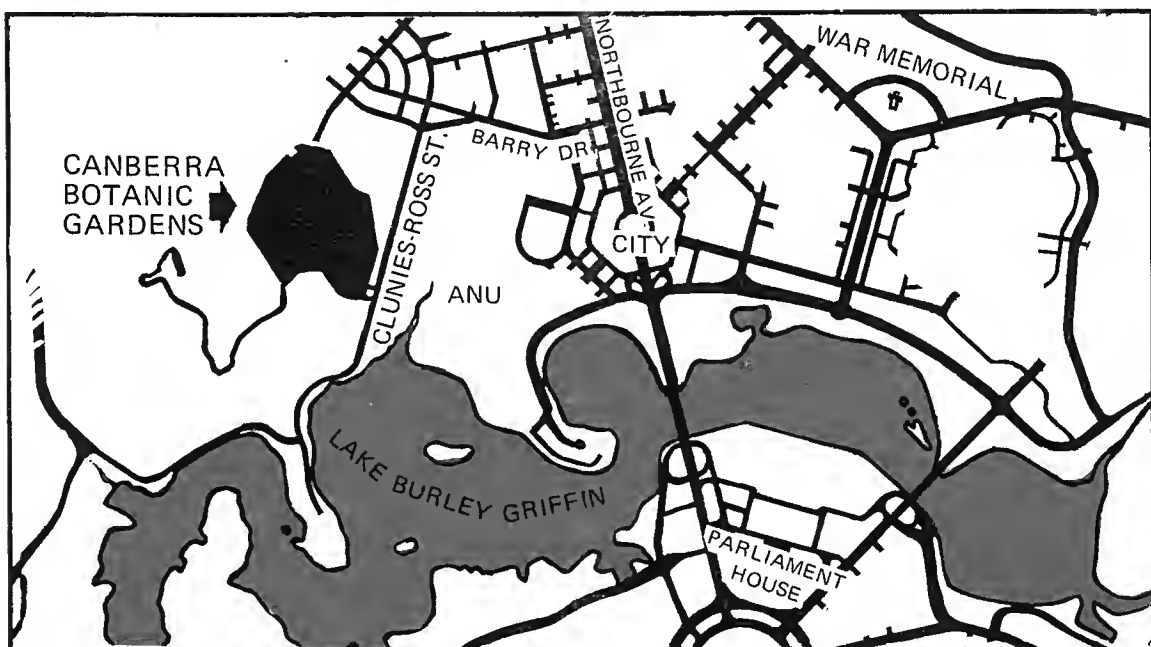
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Canberra Botanic Gardens

BLUE ARROW TOUR

WHITE ARROW TOUR

OTHER WALKS

